

Water Quality Standards

<http://www.state.ak.us/dec/water/wqsar/trireview/trireview.htm>

2007-2010 Triennial Review

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FACT SHEET

On-Going Water Quality Standards Projects Fish Consumption, Temperature, Bacteria, and Nutrients

There are several water quality standards currently under review that are not expected to require changes to regulations during the 2007-2010 triennial review period. Below is a brief description of these projects.

Fish Consumption

DEC will analyze whether or not human health criteria for Alaska will rely on EPA's default fish consumption values or Alaska-specific fish consumption values. Regional or waterbody specific criteria will be reviewed with subsistence information for protection of high subsistence use waters. During the next three years DEC will evaluate fish consumption in Alaska, review EPA's updated human health criteria for fish consumption, to determine applicability and implementation issues necessary to ensure Alaska's criteria are protective for all Alaskans.

Temperature

Prior to determining if regulatory changes are necessary, DEC will assess the extent to which changes in temperature may be affecting aquatic life due to various human impacts from both inside (e.g. urban development) and outside (global climate change) Alaska. EPA's Region 10 temperature guidelines, changes to temperature policies in other EPA Region 10 states, and related scientific literature pertinent to Alaska will be reviewed. DEC is participating in multiagency technical workgroups to establish protocols for data collection and analysis and determine reference sites to evaluate temperature changes. The Alaska Task Force on Climate Change (<http://www.climatechange.alaska.gov>) will also be reviewing water quality standards for warming estuaries and fresh water habitat which support fisheries. In addition to reviewing implementation issues for the current temperature criteria, DEC may consider revising the criteria if necessary to take appropriate actions on climate change and habitat protection.

Bacteria

Currently Alaska's bacteria standard is based on Food and Drug Administration recommendations for fecal coliform bacteria standard to protect fish and seafood consumption. Fecal coliform bacteria are a microbial indicator of probable sewage or fecal contamination. EPA has also promulgated bacteria criteria for marine recreation use in Alaska that use Enterococci bacteria as the microbial indicator. Based on recent research and EPA's updated

recommendations, the department is assessing whether Alaska's water quality standard should be revised. The department is also working on implementation issues for bacteria criteria through the BEACH Grant program including beach monitoring activities and studies of sample holding time limits.

Nutrients

Alaska has experienced urban development and some agricultural activity in the Anchorage and Matanuska-Susitna Valley (Cook Inlet Ecoregion) that may cause pollution by nutrients in some waterbodies. The department (with other state and federal agencies) is in the process of monitoring selected waterbodies in these areas for nutrients and related parameters. DEC will continue monitoring activities to make recommendations for numeric nutrient criteria for Alaska. Research will continue to focus on the Cook Inlet Ecoregion.

What's next?

If you have questions or comments regarding these on-going water quality projects see our website at

<http://www.state.ak.us/dec/water/wqsar/wqs/triennialreview> or contact

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